2:Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1936) 1949
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many cattle, sheep, and goats and most of their country is suitable for a pastoral life. Fishing plays a big part in the economy of the lakeside tribes. Hunting is little practised to-day, but in the old days organized battues were a regular feature.

The homestead, the residence of an elementary family or joint family, is generally called *dala*, a Bantu word, but in the more purely Luo parts of the country the Nilotic word *pacho* (pl. *mier*) is used, especially by the older men. It is usually surrounded by a thick hedge of euphorbia, a narrow gap in which is the entrance to the kraal, round which are the huts and granaries. Nothing is said about the domestic life of such homesteads nor of kinship life in this article, for its purpose is to outline the nature of the larger structural groups.

## 2

At the present time Luoland is divided into a number of administrative locations. These locations, shown on the map, vary considerably in size of area and population. According to official returns most have populations of under 20,000 and the only two with populations of over 30,000 are Alego (53,604 with density of 244 to the square mile) and Samia (41,011 with density of 193). Density of population is greatest in some of the fertile northerly locations : North Ugenya (29,363 with density of 515), South Ugenya (7,497 with density of 341), and North Gem (29,014 with density of 387). It is lowest in some of the lakeside locations in South Kavirondo : Kasingiri (1,904 with density of 12), Kasigunga (2,041 with density of 21), and Gwasi (4,934 with density of 42).

These locations correspond approximately with the old tribal areas of the Luo. The main differences are that in South Kavirondo Karacuonyo location (28,207 with density of 167), Mumbo location (26,465 with density of 174), and Kabondo location (7,926 with density of 126) comprised a single tribe, as did North Gem and South Gem (19,442 with density of 237), North Ugenya and South Ugenya, and West Kano (28,617 with density of 265) and East Kano (25,730 with density of 158).

It is beyond question that the whole of Luoland was once occupied by Bantu and Nilo-Hamitic tribes and that the pressure which has continued, particularly against the Bantu, on the confines of Luoland to the north, east, and south, almost up to the present day is the end of a gradual process of expansion and assimilation. The Luo have been greatly influenced by Bantu culture during its development.

The expansion of the Luo towards the south has resulted in their division into two parts between which Kisumu location forms a narrow bridge, the Luo of Central Kavirondo, the *Joiye*, the 'Inside People', and the Luo of South Kavirondo, the *Jooko*, the 'Outside People'. The southwards migration seems to have been across the gulf from Uyoma and Asembo to Karacuonyo, and not round it and to have taken place over several generations, commencing, if the genealogies are to be trusted about seven generations ago. Across the gulf the Luo came up against Bantu (*Mwa*) and Nilo-Hamitic (*Langu*) tribes. The conquest and cultural

584 dispose of it as he pleased. On her return a feast was held—the *tero nyako*—for her and her companions. Preparations for this feast were made before her arrival, and the guests invited and the kind of entertainment provided seems to have varied according to the family circumstances. If the parents were poor only the girl's sisters and the friends of her own age who had accompanied her were present; porridge and milk were set before them, and the guests returned on the same day to their own homes. But if the family was rich, older relations and friends of both sexes were invited and were given meat and beer. The quantity of beer required was often more than could be stored in the accustomed place, namely the hut belonging to the [343] girl's mother, and in this case a temporary shelter was built, known as the *siwandha*. It was constructed of reed mats between the mother's hut and the hut next to it, and if the number of reed mats available in the *dala* was insufficient, more were borrowed from the neighbours. After the beer had been drunk the *siwandha* hut was dismantled and its component parts returned to their owners. The [435 guests stayed two or even three days, and it was the convention that before their departure a final meal of meat or of a kind of dried fish 252] called *kabaka* (an expensive dish that cost a goat to buy) should be provided and cooked for them by the mother of the bride.

A sort of parallel to this feast known as *lupo* then took place in the bridegroom's *dala*, a cow or a goat being sent to him by the bride's parents to be killed and eaten by his brothers and sisters.

291 After the *tero nyako* and the *lupo* had taken place a bull known as the *dho golo onyimbo* was paid by the bridegroom, and with them 584 he sent a new *onyimbo*, specially made for her, to the bride. She then returned the *onyimbo* lent to her by the bridegroom's sister, and also took off the small *chieno* and burnt it, being now entitled to wear the big *chieno* of the married woman. This was a bunch of aloe fibre about ten inches long and thick enough to have a diameter of three or four inches. It was tied tightly at the top like a tassel, and was worn hanging from the small of the back, being attached to a string which passed round the waist. This, and a six inch square apron of fibre [177] string was all that a Luo woman wore, apart from her ornaments until the advent of the Indian trader with his cotton piece goods at the beginning of the century.*

[689] * Even now a woman who puts on a cotton dress when she leaves the *dala* sometimes reverts in the privacy of her home to the traditional nakedness adorned only by the tassel and the fringe, and often the dress is put on over the tassel. This curious ornament has clearly a ritual if not a magical significance, of which I hope to obtains details later. I was informed that if a man touches, accidentally or purposely, the tassel of a married woman, he has to pay a fine of three goats to her husband. Moreover, when a woman loses her husband she discards her tassel of aloe fibre and replaces it by one of banana fibre, and this tassel [789] apparently has maleficent properties. For if any man annoys her, she is likely to take it off and beat one of his cows with it, whereupon the cow is regarded as bewitched, and no one will buy it, or accept it in payment of a debt.

241 826 indicate that sowing time is at hand. In the autumn, there is the ordinary African kite, which comes over literally, at times, in thousands, feeding in the air, and on the ground on the swarms of flying ants. Some withhold their sowing until these birds appear.

241 782 In exceptional cases an important sacrifice, called " bilo " was performed before sowing took place. If the " Jaduong' bilo " was warned in a dream of impending disaster to the coming season's food supply, he called the elders of the community together for the purpose of the ceremony. " Bilo " was performed to avert any disaster threatening the community. It was always performed in the early morning, before the cattle had gone out to graze. The present " Jabilo " in Sakwa location performed the ceremony of " bilo " in 1931 when the people of Sakwa had a boundary dispute with their neighbours of Asembo. He performed it again in the early months of 1933 to get rid of the locusts. It is natural that not a few in Sakwa attribute the absence of locusts this year to the effect of this ceremony.

241 177 [626] When the time was ripe for sowing, the " Mikayi " or chief wife of the head of the community, was always the first to sow. None dare begin their sowing until the " mikayi " had thus given permission. Any who were so bold as to begin before the " mikayi " were made to feel the displeasure of the community. As recently as 1931 I have known a man to come under discipline for sowing too soon. But what with the efforts of the Agricultural Department, pressing upon the people the wisdom of early sowing, together with a widespread knowledge of the names of the months, re-inforced by the rise of individualism accompanied by the breakdown of tribal authority, the influence of the " mikayi " is steadily waning. Amongst the more advanced sections of the communities it has ceased to exist, and they are no longer subject to discipline for early sowing. After sowing comes a pause, but not for long. About April weeding begins. This is shared in by all. Amongst the sturdier crops, it is done by the hoe, but in crops like the small millet, called " kal," the seed is sown too closely for there to be room for a hoe, so it has to be done by hand, the weeders squatting down on their heels and pulling up the weeds. This results in a much trampled crop, but it very soon recovers, and suffers no damage. In recent years the Administration has made great efforts to get people to eradicate the striga weed, called by the Luo " hayongo." This weed shoots up, curiously enough, after the customary weeding has been done. The Luo let it grow in spite of the fact that they know that land infested with it must be left for a term of years. I have over and over again tried to persuade them of the wisdom and benefit of getting rid of it, but to no avail. Anything which comes after the routine weeding has been done is allowed to remain.

241 Similarly, during this time she must be careful where she walks. She
841 can ruin a crop by walking through it. But, of course, in this case, she would suffer with the other members of the family.

462 From early childhood the girl is brought up as an agricultural
787 labourer. There was no class of women divorced from the soil. The only class whose labours in agriculture were lightened were the women
791 who belonged to the divining cult of " SEWE." Sewe is the spirit of divination and is supposed to have descended on those who have been delirious in illness. The delirium is the sign of possession. The devotees of the cult are mainly women, and they are a fairly common sight as they go about their avocation. They are skilled beggars as
[301] well as diviners. With their bodies festooned with strings of beads, shells, bells and other barbaric ornaments, they pass from kraal to kraal, and standing with their bodies leaning forward supported by a
[431] hand resting on a short stick they sing songs of the countryside and and are rewarded by presents of small baskets of grain. In this way women who have been ill are enabled to help to replenish the grain stores, which have probably run low during the illness.

241 Gradually a change is coming over the life of the women, due to
●177 white influence. Ploughing by the men with teams of oxen, is setting women free for other tasks. This movement is by no means wide-
252 spread, but it has begun, and its effect on the women has been great.
462 Even if the husband has no team and plough himself, many wives do not rest content until the husband has hired a plough owner to come along and plough up the land. It is not unusual for ploughs to be taken 15 miles for this purpose. Again, the use of hand mills of the " Colonist " type, is easing women of much labour at the grind stones. These are much more common than ploughs, probably there are twenty mills for every plough in use. This is partly accounted for by the fact that the mills are turned by hand power, not by oxen. At this labour girls and women take their share, but whereas you would never see a man down on his knees at the grindstone, you do see them turning a mill. New activities are employing the time of many women, and those who have learned to knit or make palm mats in recent years are rapidly increasing in numbers.

CHILD LABOUR:

857 Generally speaking, from early childhood, all are required to make some contribution to the activities of the home. Girls for the fields, and boys for herding, is the broad division of labour, though the boys also lend a hand in the fields, and, very occasionally, a girl or woman may be seen herding. With the opening up of
593 avenues of wage-earning to the boys on coffee and tea estates, and in
[464 other forms of employment, the male child is being made by impecuni-
651] ous parents to make his contribution to the family hut tax,

16: Northcote G-5 (no date) 1907 FL11 Luo FL11



642 have absolute power, but in reality their influence is not great. Each chief
643 subdivides his territory, placing each portion under a sub-chief. These sub-chiefs or headmen are supposed to attend frequently at the chief's village in order to hear and carry out his orders. If a crisis arises, an informal council of the heads of the village is called and the *patres familiarum* can express their views, though the decision rests with the chief. There is no kind of voting. This council will also assemble if the rule of the chief becomes intolerable. They may threaten to secede, but their resistance is always passive; the usual result, however, is that one or more of the headmen set up as chiefs on their own account, and quietly
[423] disregard the orders of their *quondam* superior. Land is held in common by the members of each clan, but jealously guarded from subjects of all other chiefs. A
[166] man may, and frequently does, move from one clan to another, but in that case he has to obey the orders of the chief to whose clan he has attached himself. There are no formalities attendant on such a change.

578 Trespass by the members of one chieftaincy upon the land of another is indeed the usual cause of the frequent small quarrels which arise and very often lead to bloodshed.

423 Internally, however, private ownership of land has to some extent made its appearance. The Jaluo village represents a family, the headman being the father
621 or (if he be dead) the eldest brother. Besides his family he will, if he is a chief, or
[177] sub-chief, generally shelter one or two retainers whom he calls his *askari*,[1] police. When the time comes for laying out the *Shamba*[1] or agricultural land, each adult male and female marks out and tills his own piece, the married women being helped by their daughters and younger sons; although the family in practice share the produce, theoretically the crop from each plot belongs to the member who tilled it; thus, if one of the sons wishes to sell some grain he can only sell what he has grown himself, and, similarly, one *askari* reaping what another has sown would be considered a thief.

685 Cases occasionally arise which illustrate this: if A's cattle or goats wander
423 into B's *shamba*, though A and B live in one village, B claims compensation. Private tenure is, however, only temporary. If a village uses a certain piece of land for a year and then leaves it, another village may cultivate there; but as the *shambas* are usually close to the villages, and villages are separated by some little distance, such cases of appropriation are practically unknown. The rights, however, to a certain piece of land are only squatter's rights and confer no claim *in perpetuo*.

361 In shape the Jaluo village is circular and is fenced round with euphorbia
[343] bush, stone or mud walls, or watling, as may be most convenient. In the centre is the cattle pen; around this are the store houses of basket or wicker work; they are raised some two feet from the ground and are about five feet high and three feet in diameter; there is a small opening near the top sufficient to

[1] Swahili word adopted.

19:Wilson E-5 (ca. 1950) 1960
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goals which have been carefully weighed and assessed as to the possible supernatural and social consequences. The Joluo believe that a goal does not justify the means if the means require violence, unless all methods of arbitration, conciliation, appeal to authority, both temporal and supernatural, have been tried and proved to be unsuccessful or inadequate.

Violence requires cleansing—physical and spiritual cleansing of the most exacting nature—to avoid the supernatural consequences (*chira*) which violence may bring in its wake. One case has been recorded which contains an excellent description of the ceremonial and ritual cleansing thought to be essential after a murder. This particular murder was planned and executed by a group which, after years of thought and effort to resolve the conflict without violence, finally resorted to murder. Obviously, with the coming of the European, other factors were involved to escape detection for an act which in the old days would have given the group high status within its own community and which would have created feuds or precipitated a war that ultimately would have been resolved by blood compensation or schism of the political unit and migration by the weakest group.

Violence which arises immediately and unpremeditatively from quarrels, drinking, infidelity, sex, marital tensions, or family differences, and which results in a death, is not regarded in the same way as predetermined action decided upon as a last resort. Ceremonial cleansing is still necessary but does not take the extreme form because these acts are regarded by the Luo as bringing consequences which affect the individual only, that is *kwer*, and not *chira*, which affects the group, clan, or tribe as a whole. Fortunately British law makes a similar distinction: that between murder and manslaughter. It will be found therefore that the majority of cases involving Joluo which have come before the courts of Kenya as murder cases are resolved and punished as cases of manslaughter. The Joluo do not, however, understand why many of those convicted un-

20:Ominde I-5 (ca. 1948) 1952
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# INTRODUCTION

THIS piece of work is the result of a survey carried out in Nyahera among Luo people living round the African Inland Mission, seven miles north-west of the township of Kisumu. This investigation has provided a basis from which generalizations could be made by comparing the conditions in this locality with those in other parts of the Luo country.

Superstitions—beliefs in magic and the work of spirits —are common among the Luo people; and it appears to me that any differences in the conditions existing in various localities can be attributed to the extent to which Christian influence and economic pressure have modified the people's beliefs and manner of life.

Local differences may also be due to customs acquired from the numerous tribes contacted by the Luo in their migration. Remnants of these customs and social practices may still be found in the assimilated tribal groups.

This investigation originated from a desire to study the social development of a Luo girl. I have therefore put forward such information as I think might interest anyone engaged in educational work among the people of this tribe. I hope too that it may interest students in attempting to solve problems which would further the advance of education and broaden the outlook of parents in relation to their children.

The material put forward leaves an enormous field for comparison, criticism, and independent investigation by serious students of Luo society. The nature of the problems dealt with may also make the information appear fragmentary; but I have attempted, within the serious limitations involved, to provide a structure on which

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# I

# INFANCY AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

## Feeding

*Under one year.* For the first month of a baby's life its chief food is its mother's milk. But when the mother's milk is insufficient, gruel may be given as early as at two to three weeks old. Although cow's milk is now sometimes used instead of gruel, it is still chiefly regarded as a modern introduction by the missionaries in an effort to promote infant health.

Between the ages of one and three months, gruel and breast-feeding play about equal parts. When the mothers go out to work, suckling tends to be limited to mornings and evenings. The average age at which babies are given gruel is one month. From the third to the sixth month milk from the breast and gruel continue to form the child's main diet, but after this, gruel begins to prevail over breast-feeding. Although maize flour is occasionally used in the preparation of gruel, the usual flour for this purpose is obtained from sorghum and eleusine, a species of millet. Whenever possible a little sour milk is added to the mixture. Between five and six months certain children have frequent tastes of adult food given to them by their nurses.

Although nurses are allowed to give gruel to the children, difficulties in handling a baby sometimes result in under-feeding, which is often made worse by the low food-content of the gruel itself. Through training by nurses, babies are accustomed to adult food before their mothers actually give it to them, so it can happen that

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when a mother is eating she will hear her child cry out for some of her food.

From six to nine months, gruel continues to be the staple article of diet. In certain strict families adult food is not given until the child is over a year old. Babies fed on cow's milk begin using adult food during the first or second month.

*Restrictions on the suckling of babies.* It is considered a breach of taboo for a nursing mother to suckle her neighbour's child. This restriction is based on the fear that some woman with poor milk may, in suckling a baby, kill it. One of my informants pointed out that in the early days of missionary work an attempt to break this taboo had failed. She said that many of the children thus suckled had died, and the attempt had been abandoned. One exception to the restriction, however, is that of a mother-in-law. In cases of necessity she is permitted to suckle her daughter-in-law's child because it is assumed that her milk has stood the test.

In rare instances there seems to be different treatment of male and female children in a polygamous home with regard to suckling. Some of my informants stated that inter-suckling is permitted if all the nursing mothers have female babies.

Nevertheless, the taboo against inter-suckling of male babies is reinforced by the fact that it is possible for a son to marry one of his father's younger wives. Hence a woman refuses to suckle a child who might become her husband on the death of the father.

The social restriction with regard to the suckling of infants is still observed with rigidity, and there are no evidences of a change even under the impact of modern ideas.

*Methods of feeding.* No force is used in feeding young babies. A little gruel in a small container is put to the

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153 such circumstances they have to depend on their mothers' milk.

Although the time and nature of her work may force a woman to feed her child at certain hours, there is otherwise no fixed time for feeding babies. If the mother is present, the child is suckled whenever it wants to. Thus babies having such treatment grow up with a particularly strong liking for their mothers' breasts. As soon as a baby is big enough, the mother begins to limit her suckling and to increase the frequency of gruel-taking. The frequency of suckling is greater for babies between one and three months, the intervals increasing with the age of the child. Daily absence of the mother when she is working at a distance may also impose longer intervals between the successive sucklings than would be the case if the mother were nearby, or within the village. Chil-
[177] dren in more enlightened families are started on cow's milk after one or two months, and are given gruel after six months.

There is a widespread belief that gruel strengthens the bones, and therefore should be a very important article of diet just before the child begins to walk.

### Cleanliness

154 There is a general slackness in the washing of children by Luo mothers, which increases as the children grow older, but sometimes, especially among the more ad-
[178] vanced people, they are kept tidy regularly. It may be of interest to know that, in the past, they were washed early every morning in cold water in the belief that this would make them strong. Whenever the children empty their bowels they are cleaned with old rags or soft leaves. The limited supply of old rags makes the use of leaves more common.

*Bedding and clothes.* No clothes are especially made for the babies.

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the babies. With the exception of a few children in progressive households, both pagan and Christian children go without clothes; and even when they have them their provision is meagre. There is, however, a tendency for Christian children to be better clothed than those in pagan families, and the latter continue to walk naked for a much longer time.

Bedding is scanty. Dried hides, mats, and old clothes are used, the child's bedding and the mother's being usually the same. Very rarely does the mother sleep apart from her child, and only a few modern parents form an exception in constructing small beds for their children. In the daytime, when asleep, they are generally laid in some shady place beside the house, or on hides, old rags, or mats. Those who have beds may use them, but the majority of children are placed in the open where dust not infrequently blows into their mouths.

## Mental and Physical Development

According to the mothers interviewed, the earliest signs of mental and physical development in babies are smiling and lifting of the arms, actions which take place after the second month. This early smile may not be an expression of pleasure but merely an imitation of the mother, who begins to tickle her baby while smiling herself in order to induce it to smile. This induced smile is more noticeable after the third month.

During the fourth month, the child generally plays alone wherever it is put down, provided that it has no serious illness. By the fifth month the senses of hearing and seeing have so far developed that when it hears a noise, the child listens and looks in the right direction.

The period of sitting the child up begins during the sixth month, although trials are made early in the fifth month, while in the course of the seventh month, with

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857 sometimes break up at the slightest provocation or mis-
572 understanding. The lineal character of the friendship is
[613] facilitated by the social groupings of the people into lineages living side by side. This character is also assumed by the play groups which begin from the immediate family circle and widen to include other members of the lineage to which the children belong. Although there also exists a considerable degree of friendship among male children it does not seem to be organized as closely as that among the girls. Though I saw frequent examples of individual boyhood friendship I did not come across such a highly-developed arrangement.

## The Cultural Pattern

857 Girls are born to a ready-made pattern of life and
858 they are forced to follow this pattern from earliest childhood. The school-age period is the one in which girls are especially trained to fit into the culture to which
[177] they have been born. A woman's life therefore tends to show great conservatism even where civilizing influences have considerably penetrated. This conservatism is maintained through all the early training of the children and domestic activities are still carried on in almost the same traditional way.

In contrast, we find that male children between these ages have a greater degree of freedom. I noticed a larger variety of playthings among boys than among girls of the same school-going age. Day after day the girls repeated imitations of the maternal activities. It was also much more difficult to discover where a group of boys had been playing than to find the favourite playgrounds of the female children. This was perhaps due to the difference in their freedom of movement. The occupations of the girls keep them largely at home while the boys range over a much greater area.

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the older girls among whom the younger girls sleep. Male visitors from the homes of women in adjoining homesteads also provide an opportunity for learning the coquetry and customs of the more mature girls. Although girls of school-going age are inexperienced, they are not despised on these occasions, though the necessity of keeping order in the room forces the older girls to keep an eye on the younger girls to discourage unnecessary laughter.

*The family and the school.* Modern school education acts as a break in the continuity of education for domestic purposes. The school demands regular attendance, whereas the mother requires the labour of her daughter. For the young girl, the school provides a relief from hard and tedious work for the family, and from her mother's supervision. It also provides an unrestricted field of association with other girls, whereas at home she would rarely have time to see her girl friends. Thus the school gives a very different environment. There is a general tendency to become lazy among schoolgirls passing into adolescence.

The school forces parents to sacrifice themselves; hence there is no great keenness among mothers with regard to their daughters' education. The majority of them ignore it or are actively against it. In most quarters the desired knowledge for girls is limited to reading and writing. Beyond this, women have not been able to appreciate education for girls, and they often delay their daughters' entrance into schools. Thus in the lower Primary stages most of the girls are slightly older than the boys.

Education for girls is also distrusted because at present mothers feel that after it their daughters would not fit into the pattern of life into which they were born. There is also a feeling that the traditional education at home would suffer.

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tional society had a more deliberate or conscious sex education than they receive in modern times. Instruction on the nature of sexual relationship was formerly given by an old woman of the village, whose hut served as a communal sleeping place for the girls. This old woman was one who must have stopped giving birth to children. She was either a grandmother or an elder wife in a polygamous homestead. The communal sleeping places are still a feature of the girls' environment, but many of the modern huts have no experienced woman in them; hence the girls have lost their former source of instruction on both the marital and the following day-to-day relationships.

The change from the traditional type of sex education has forced girls approaching marriage to seek information elsewhere. At present they usually make enquiries of experienced married women living in their neighbourhood. Beyond a few cautious warnings, mothers are rarely known to take part in the sex education of their daughters while fathers are completely detached from this field of enquiry.

*Sex activities in the communal sleeping places.* Talks on sex are not the only activities engaged in by adolescent girls in their sleeping places. In some areas they also receive nocturnal visits from young men who have failed to find suitable opportunities to meet them during the day. This is not a widely spread practice, however, which may be due partly to the strict morality imposed by Christian moral conventions.

Sometimes the girls themselves make arrangements to welcome these visitors by night, remaining awake in order to open the door for the men with whom they have made the appointment. Sometimes this form of visit is also carried out by young men without the girls' consent, but if they are discovered, a great outcry is

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this attitude that unmarried girls, as they grow older, are often forced to marry in the end by taking advantage of the institution of polygamy, which acts as a final method of absorption. Although she may live to an advanced age, a single girl is continually tormented by the fact that society does not approve of unmarried girls.

*Restrictions.* Traditionally, a mature girl is not allowed to enter her father's or her mother's sleeping place, especially if the mother is still giving birth to children. This restriction, although generally ignored by Christians, applies also to the wives of her uncles. Those who are her parents or parents by marriage do not go where a girl receives her male visitors. By custom this hut was built beyond view of the parents' huts and served as a sleeping place for boys. It is considered that a girl who has commenced associating with men should not enter her mother's or father's hut because she would interfere with their powers of reproduction.

*Relationship with brothers.* The fear of incest has led to the practice of keeping young women's activities as separate as possible from those of their brothers, but free association and conversation concerning their mutual interests generally takes place, since brothers and sisters retain an interest in each others' love affairs. From his sisters, a young man may be informed of things he wishes to know about his girl friend.

*Pre-marital pregnancy.* Cases of pre-marital pregnancy were very rare in the past, according to most of my informants. But this rarity was not due to the fact that sexual relationships were prohibited. Pregnancy among mature girls was apparently not infrequent from any strict moral code, but from the conscious effort of the girls themselves to guard against it. Because much importance was attached to virginity, it was a matter of personal pride and was carefully guarded. It was a great honour and a

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meat to be shared among the different families within the larger lineage to which the husband belongs. This is followed by a big feast at the girl's home where people spend a whole night outside, drinking, eating, and singing. When the girl returns to his home it is time for the husband to continue paying dowry as demanded by her parents.

The final ceremony marking the completion of the dowry and indicating the husband's satisfaction with his wife is called 'riso'. At this the husband slaughters an animal and gives a great feast to his relatives.

*Variants of traditional marriage customs.* With the introduction of modern ideas and the widening of the people's physical environment, a large number of special marriages now occur which omit various features of the traditional ceremony. This is especially true of marriages where there is a strong basis of love. In such instances a young woman may go to her suitor without ceremony after making some private arrangement.

Christian influence has greatly modified marriage. Like the traditional marriage the Christian version is characterized by many ceremonies, some new and some old. Thus in the traditional marriage the husband is required at each stage to make several payments in live animals to cover certain procedures, and in Christian marriage he can cover all of them at once by paying a live animal or some money.

The violence which characterized former marriages is absent from the Christian ceremony. In reality, what happens inside the church is purely western, but what occurs outside is a blend of modified traditional practices and certain features of western life. Christian marriage is distinguished from traditional marriage by the large expense involved. Thus, contrary to what might be expected, it is among the Christians that people exist who

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585 demand very high dowries for their daughters. Like the
● 177 traditional marriage it[1] is also accompanied by con-
[583] siderable emotional strain, felt more by the mother and
[152] female children than by the male members of the family.

[1] [i.e. Christian marriage. – Analyst]

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# VI

## MARRIED LIFE

WITH the exception of those women who move with their husbands to the towns, the majority of rural married women go through a period of living under the close supervision of their mothers-in-law. The duration of this time depends on the mutual feeling between wife and mother-in-law.

The married woman must learn everything possible about her new family. The mother-in-law tells her about the various sources of food and assists her to fit into her new life in the manner desired. Very often this involves unlearning certain things she has learnt at home. Among other things, she must learn the meal hours and individual tastes of those in the new family, and this brief probationary period gives character to her future relationship with them. At this time a mean woman is soon known by her behaviour; moreover, in the earlier stages of her married life a young wife is constantly accompanied by a companion who reports her general attitude to the family.

Other women in the home may also send her on errands wherever they wish, the idea being to test her character in the communal life of women. Hence unpopularity would have a profound effect upon her, and through her, upon her husband. But although she is under the authority of her mother-in-law or someone occupying the same position, her mother-in-law's actions are also open to censure by the other women. The problem of fitting a wife into this new life is thus a family affair.

Great importance is still attached to the traditional



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schooling of wives, but modern young women sometimes rebel against this ordered régime, choosing rather to do as they please in their new homes.

Since the introduction of the plough, the part played by men in the cultivation of the fields has greatly increased. Clearing and ploughing are now done by men, but planting and harvesting are still carried on largely by women.

*Women's organizations.* In the past, women's activities were limited in number. Apart from the communal dancing parties in which they took a great pride, there existed among certain related families councils to settle disputes and misconduct among women. This communal organization has tended to become weaker with the growing family individuality introduced by modern conditions.

While Christian influence has increased their freedom by releasing women from tribal prejudice and by widening the horizon of men's views, pagan women are still hampered from taking an active part in modern economic and social activities.

Women's organizations range from small religious groups to registered co-operative societies. The management of the co-operative societies is largely in the hands of Christian women. They are thus more progressive than their pagan neighbours, although the gap is rapidly narrowing owing to the influence exercised by Christian women upon the other women in the community.

*The changing economy.* Before the introduction of a money economy, the garden formed the basis of the economic life of women. Their transactions depended on garden produce which they bartered in exchange for live animals. The more industrious and economical thus acquired considerable wealth, supplementing garden

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economy by handicrafts and exchanging pots and baskets for corn.

The introduction of modern household goods of a more durable nature has lessened women's chances of earning money through weaving baskets or making pots. The overcrowding of land has also meant an increased economic dependence on men. To satisfy family demands, most women engage in some kind of business transaction which often keeps them out of the home from morning till late in the evening. Although motor transport has improved these conditions, children have been unfavourably affected through neglect during the mother's prolonged absence. This change from sedentary occupation to long-distance travel has taken place since the coming of new economic standards, and at the moment it is very rare to find a woman who does not trade in a small way.

### Women and the Birth of Children

*Customs and taboos.* The customs and taboos observed by expectant mothers merely reflect the social attitude of Luo women to the birth of their children. Thus the aims of the customs and taboos can only be appreciated in the light of a social desire for the woman to give birth without difficulty. Fundamentally this is also a basis for the disapproval of the birth of twins, and also of abnormal deliveries.

Concerning the persistence of the marital relationship during pregnancy there is no generally accepted restriction. But while custom varies from person to person, any sexual relationship continuing after the sixth month of pregnancy is regarded as excessive. The only social stigma attached to sexual relationship continued for the greater part of this period, is that it may provoke an open rebuke from the midwives or other women. Thus while no hard

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843 Dietary restriction may also be a matter of family
262 habit or taboo. Thus a mother may inform her children while they are young that a certain kind of food is not to
[753] be eaten by members of their family. This restriction may result from a fear of spreading certain diseases, generally skin ailments, latent in that particular family group. The restriction does not apply to others who are free from the supposed disease. When a woman gives birth to a baby her habits in these respects do not change.

[756] A dietary restriction may also result from the instruction of a medicine man, as in the case of a woman who has had no child for a long time. During his treatment
[784] the medicine man gives instruction on taboos and compulsory dietary restrictions. Dislike of a certain food during pregnancy may also result from personal disagreeable experience. This is also generally assigned to the will of the child. Restraints of a family origin, as well as those imposed by the medicine man and acquired from personal experience, are more strictly adhered to than the traditional restrictions.

843 *Medicinal restrictions.* The list of medicines that expec-
278 tant mothers may not take is a small one. Apart from the traditional strong purgatives and medicines for kill-
•177 ing worms, modern drugs like quinine and strong European laxatives are eliminated, such measures being designed to prevent abortion or premature birth.

843 *Social relationship.* Superstitions affecting expectant mothers have very largely yielded to the influence of
[177] Christianity, but we find remnants of old regulations,
[516] such as those connected with sitting, still observed by women. An expectant mother is required to sit with a straight back. Neither should she put one of her legs on top of another, because it is believed that the expected child in assuming a similar position would be difficult to

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843 [846] the custom which confines a female child in the hut with its mother for only three days, whereas a male child would stay with its mother for four days, thus giving her a longer rest. In reality, only those women who have given birth to two or more children seem to be able to make any successful guess as to the sex of their expected child.

## The Birth of a Child

844 177 *Preparations.* Among the Christian women, customs connected with the preparation for a birth have largely been dropped; but superstition is still a very real factor in the life of every Luo woman. Hence, for example, the preparation of bedding and clothes before a birth is usually neglected on purpose, the position being even worse in families of low income. When women give birth in the maternity wards, the husbands therefore have to make a hasty preparation during the seven days spent by their wives in hospital.

843 177 [302] Among the pagans, the pain or nausea experienced during the first few months of foetal growth is mitigated by the administration of a certain medicine. When this trouble has ceased the woman is expected to grow long hair which should not be shaved until the child is born. Those pagan women who associate much with Christians, however, have abolished this custom of growing hair, though some of them still take the medicine. Among the pagans, the expectant mother takes a light purgative during the sixth month which is believed to free her from any abdominal impurity. Strong purgatives are forbidden in case they may cause abortion or premature birth.

844 *Assistance during delivery.* The assistance a woman receives when giving birth depends on the circumstances in which she finds herself. There is no ruling laid down

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844 in life. The women themselves seem to share a belief that neither their own efforts nor the assistance of others have much effect upon the actual delivery of children. They prefer to believe that it is some mysterious power of God which helps them to give birth to their children.

845 *Difficult labour.* Although difficult labour cases are now largely dealt with in the hospitals, the crude traditional methods are occasionally used in remote areas, and they indicate the extent to which people will go to save the lives of mothers. To the midwives a difficult labour was formerly a dreaded situation. The mothers could suffer for days, and many of them died before relief was given. If a woman died before the birth it was considered a very bad omen. A stranger had to be paid to cut her open and remove the dead child, but no relative of her own was allowed to touch her.

When there was any hope of saving the mother's life, a large number of people gathered about her, and many deaths may have occurred through over-manipulation. Sometimes as many as ten persons were engaged in operating, while others stood by giving confused advice. The group performing the operation included men as well as women. The men held the woman while the women pulled on the head of the child, which was hooked on an iron hoe.

When this was done, little attention was paid to the damage of the passage from the womb. If the woman suffered twice from such a difficult delivery, she and her husband were advised to cease having children. If the advice was not observed the midwives had a right to refuse their help.

[177] *Twins.* The birth of twins was an unwelcome experience in pre-Christianized society, but in these days it is rarely accompanied by its traditional ceremonies of lamentation. According to tradition, as soon as the loud

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cry of the midwives was heard announcing the birth of twins, the news had to be carried to the parents of the woman. This loud cry was intended to scare the evil spirits which had brought about the double birth. With it began a series of taboos on the couple as well as on the twins, the family being virtually isolated from society. For emptying their bowels a large pot was placed in a hidden corner at the back of the house. If either of the twins died during the early period it was thrown into this pot. In place of the usual clothing, the couple had creepers twined around them. The period of taboo closed with a large gathering at which a great deal of beer was drunk. At this final ceremony the dancing was rather obscene and was accompanied by foul language in reference to the couple. These proceedings lifted the taboo from the shoulders of the parents, but the twins continued to be affected until their deaths. Moreover, anything done to one of the twins had to be done to the other also, because they could not be treated as separate identities. Now the attitude has greatly changed and even among pagans these customs are no longer observed.

Similarly, a birth in which the baby's legs appeared first was dreaded. This was ascribed to the work of the evil spirit.

*Renewal of marital relationship.* Originally it was the custom for the renewal of a marital relationship to take place on the third day following the birth of a female child, and on the fourth day after a male child. No married relatives were allowed to enter the hut to see the baby before the parents of the child renewed their marital relationship.

Although none of my informants could testify that this practice still exists, it is possible that it persists in certain places. Some of the informants pointed out that

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modern maternity wards have weakened the custom, since women stay in them for seven days and return home after having shown the baby to many of their friends.

*Protection against witches.* Although Christian mothers are not affected by this kind of superstition, pagan mothers still tie things around the necks of their babies to protect them from malignant glances, these articles being attached when the children are exposed to the view of relatives and friends. Most people believe that babies can be bewitched as soon as their skin begins to darken, and the pagans believe that through magic an ill-disposed person can introduce a worm into the baby's stomach. If this occurs, the baby cries and vomits whenever it is suckled by its mother. In the past when no clothes were worn, it was believed that the mother's breast could also be bewitched. The tradition was that every living person had a beneficial worm in the stomach, and that this worm digested the food eaten. When the worm refused to digest the food, there would be serious stomach trouble which might prove fatal. When a child was bewitched it was believed that its beneficial worm had been replaced by a harmful one.

Protection against this harmful worm could supposedly be gained by scratching the body of the child (the forehead, the palm, or the flat of the foot) with some medicine, and it is still said that, if the medicine is sufficiently strong, any evil-eyed man looking at the child with the intention of bewitching it will lose his eyesight. Some fragments of bones or roots of herbs may also be worn for the same purpose. Many of these customs have disappeared in strongly Christianized areas, the Christians themselves having sometimes taken direct action to stamp them out, but nurses are still warned not to let young children play on the roadside, in order to protect their charges from being bewitched.

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## CHAPTER 6

# *The Reluctant Luo*

### I

THE Luo are the second largest tribe in Kenya, coming next to the Kikuyu, and at the moment the most influential politically. This is because most Kikuyu politicians went into detention camps at the time of Mau Mau. While Kikuyu cats were away, Luo mice played vigorously, and grabbed the best political cheese. Speaking generally, the Luo are hefty, black-skinned, somewhat ox-like people with prominent teeth, a reputation for making good labourers and a rather slow-witted approach to life.

Needless to say, there are plenty of exceptions. Mr. Tom Mboya is a Luo and, while he has been called many things, 'slow-witted' has never been among them. Their natural food is fish and they are not by nature a cattle people. Their sturdy women smoke pipes with long clay stems. The Luo are not Bantu but Nilotic and their affinities, lingual and tribal, lie more with people in Uganda, such as the Acholi, than with any other Kenya tribes. They are surrounded, however, by Bantu peoples, with whom they share the wide, fertile, steamy and mainly flat basin that surrounds Lake Victoria. Around this basin lie hills from which warrior tribes look down on them, formerly as an eagle looked upon its prey. Far to the south lie the plains of Masai.

People who have dealt with other tribes find the Luo difficult. Their obstinacy is legendary, they are inclined to be sullen and suspicious. The Kikuyu can be all these things, but they are nimble-minded, subtle and, for those they like, have charm. Luo people can be brave and loyal but charm is rarely among their attributes. They are faintly Teutonic, in an African fashion.

So it is not surprising that of all the major Kenya peoples, leaving aside the Masai, the Luo have put up the stiffest

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resistance to the forward march of Progress in the agricultural field. No spontaneous wish for any branch of Progress except the political seems to have gripped the collective Luo mind. Here, on these hot and apathetic lakeland flats, all the impetus has come from Europeans.

It might be argued that the Government has no call to make people change their ways against their will. This indeed is an argument much used by Luo politicians. It is an old story: should nanny sit by and watch Master Robert break up his toys—in this case, ruin the soil, create acute erosion, turn the whole of Nyanza province, which contains one-third of Kenya's population, into a great rural slum?

Beyond question, that was going on. In Nyanza province there are over two million cattle, about one to every two acres. It would be a job to support this rate of stocking on the finest pastures under skilled management; here it is utterly impossible. The cattle have become so small and shrivelled that they are really not much larger than Great Danes, but their sharp hoofs can still make and deepen gullies as they track a way to springs. During the last three years, the output of crops in the province has halved, because yields have dropped so sharply. Yet there are more and more mouths to feed.

All the evils of land abuse were here displayed in concentrated form. No manure, no rotations, no resting land under grass; maize or cotton again and again, planted too late and in the wrong manner; no trees, communal grazing destroyed by useless skinny little beasts. It was not for want of trying by the technical staff. For years they had been urging, persuading, bullying, demonstrating, and they had scarcely dented Luo indifference and complacency. Famine was beginning to threaten these overcrowded areas—for the one thing the people continued to produce more and more of was their own kind.

II

And so the Government decided that the only salvation for the Luo lay in dividing their communally owned land into individual holdings. Land consolidation—the first stage

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towards enclosure—was proclaimed as the official policy and, in 1958, an area called Nyabondo picked out for an experiment. The edict went forth that everyone must define his holdings, mark them out and do, in fact, as the Kikuyu were doing with such success, not to mention the Nandi and Kipsigis and many others.

On the heels of the agricolas with propaganda, local politicians moved in to tell the people it was all a trick to steal their land. Whether or no everyone believed this, no one dared to quarrel openly with the politicians, and not a single land-holder obeyed the Government.

'On 30th December, I called a meeting and closed the whole thing down,' Mr. Peter MacEntee, the D.C., told me. 'All right, I said, if you don't like it you needn't have it; ruin your land if you want to, as much as you like; what do we care? It's your funeral. Go ahead, and good luck to you. The agricolas will leave you alone from now on, the instructors are pulling out to places where people want them; we understand now that this sort of thing is *far* too advanced for you. Keep up the bad work, and good-bye.'

Mr. MacEntee had evidently enjoyed this. In time the Luo, when in their mule-like frame of mind, subdue the greatest enthusiasts. But there was a sequel.

'Three weeks later, half a dozen men from Nyabondo turned up in my office. They had a little plan, with some *shambas* boundaries marked on it. "We have decided to consolidate," they said. "Here are the boundaries of the first *shambas* we've completed. We've marked out each man's fragments and exchanged them as you said. Now we want to lay them out on proper lines. Please send us an instructor and a European."

'This was the first deputation. Others followed. Now the whole of Nyabondo is completed—the first in central Nyanza. We know what to do now. Use the couldn't-care-less technique.'

Another example: on the Kano plains, where rice grows under irrigation, until this year the agricultural department has looked after the bunds. They had endless trouble—arguments, sullen silences, even sabotage. They got the output up to 30,000 bags and there it stuck. Then they withdrew,

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telling the rice-growers they must make and maintain their own bunds. Last season the output jumped to 50,000 bags.

III

We drove to Nyabondo across the Kano plains. No one loves these plains. They are not only flat, they are absolutely treeless, dry, cracked, windswept, overcrowded, dusty and mean. The soil is 'black cotton', an especially viscous clay in which any vehicle bogs down irrevocably in wet weather—very fertile potentially, but soul-destroying to work. 'The people are like their soil,' I was told. 'They break your heart and yet you go on trying, something's there.'

Everywhere are circles of a particular euphorbia, a dark-green, harsh, ugly plant that grows about eight feet tall and surrounds every group of huts. When a family head dies, his homestead is evacuated, his huts are left to rot away and only the euphorbia hedge remains, so the plains are covered with old circles as well as those in use. People have tried planting eucalyptus trees, but white ants eat them before they are man-high.

No individual cultivates his land in one piece. He digs or ploughs a patch here, a patch there, another bit over there, two more bits down the hill and a piece two miles off across the valley that belonged to his mother's uncle. This is known as fragmentation; it is almost universal among Bantu people, exists also among others such as the Luo, and is like a net spread for the feet of Progress in which he becomes enmeshed and stultified.

The first stage of land enclosure must be for every cultivator to exchange fragments with his neighbours, so that all his land is gathered together in one piece. It is the first stage and also the hardest; land is life's blood to the people; it is like exhorting men to exchange their blood, or their children. Suspicions dart out of their holes like bee-eaters. Won't so-and-so, my neighbour, get an unfair share? The bit he wants to swap for my piece is smaller. Give up my fertile patch by the river where bananas flourish for that barren stretch of hillside? Never! Somewhere there is a trick in all this. . . .

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Behind and beyond are old beliefs that are still alive. A man can lay upon a piece of land, when he is dying, an oath that binds his heirs to hold on to it for ever, and will destroy anyone who sells it out of the family—an entail with the sanction of magic. And then old homesteads on the Kano plains sheltering behind euphorbia hedges contain the bones of the deceased owner, who is buried under the floor of his hut. So consolidation may ask the son to exchange not merely a field of maize, but the bones of his father, the terrestrial anchor of his father's spirit. No wonder it is often too much to ask, and that politicians find these deep fires easy to fan.

To reach Nyakoroko we climbed a small escarpment, the beginning of the Kipsigis hills, left the car beside a track and walked to the farm of a young, pleasant-mannered school supervisor called James Onyango, one of the leaders of the enclosure movement. We sat under a tree near his new tin-roofed modern bungalow, above a shallow valley with a stream. The country here is gently rolling and thickly dotted with roofs of homesteads. Many people had gathered in a circle; the women sat together in bright cottons and gay head-scarves, plump and glossy, most of them with grave-faced, round-eyed babies sleeping in their arms or crawling about the grass beside them. This question of land touches the women at the core. James Onyango told his story in English.

"The idea of exchanging gardens came to us two years ago; we had heard of it in other places; most of us were interested, and asked the Government to advise. We held a meeting and agreed unanimously to consolidate, all of us within the Kadianga clan, fifty-nine families. In our clan are three sub-clans; each appointed three men to form a committee. Each of these three was a *n'guru*—an elder whose task is to look after the land, and one of these was made the president.

"We started to exchange our gardens, and at first everything was fair. Then came elections for the Legislative Council and the District Council. The candidates thought they would gain popularity by speaking against the land schemes. They campaigned among the people, and some listened. They had clever ways. In each sub-location they had an agent who

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would write to the papers, or sign letters written for him, saying the people were against these schemes. And so some of us became confused. In this location we still wanted to exchange land, but some of our neighbours turned against it, and we had to stop.

'At the end of 1958 the opposition became very strong and the D.C. called a meeting to decide. The opposition staged another trick. They packed the meeting with supporters from other locations, even women who knew nothing about it at all. This was a noisy and a difficult *baraza*. Even with these methods, when it came to a vote the meeting was evenly divided. The casting vote was left to the D.C. He decided against us, and so the scheme was closed.

'We who had always been in favour were greatly harmed. We wanted the Government to bring water from the river, and surveying had already started for a piped scheme. Some of the elders went to the D.C. to ask him to change his mind, but he refused. In January, he agreed to send two people to Elgon Nyanza to see what was being done there. They saw it all, and when they returned we elected *liguru* after the pattern of the Elgon people. We called everyone together in groups, men, women and children, to plant hedges round the *shambas* that had been exchanged. I myself exchanged four pieces, and in some cases I paid money and cattle to get all my land in one piece. We managed to plant hedges round two or three *shambas* a day. Then we went to the D.C. and told him what we had done and asked him to send an officer to help us plan the use of our *shambas*. When he heard what we had done, he agreed.

'Now we have enclosed all the land of our clan and we want to have it registered. We asked the D.C., but there were still six men who refused, and the D.C. would not do it until everyone agreed. In the last few days two more have agreed, so now there are only four against it. When they agree we shall have titles to our land and then no one can upset the work we have done.'

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IV

After Mr. Onyango had spoken, others said their piece, and I asked the opinions of some of the women, who will never speak unless they are directly asked. One replied, through an interpreter, in these words:

'I was against consolidation. My own land was fertile and I did not want to lose it and have other land not as good as mine. I tried to persuade my husband. We had many arguments, and the peace of our house was destroyed. At last I saw that I must give in if our home was to become peaceful again. We exchanged gardens, and then I saw that the new gardens were as fertile as my own. Now the men are helping women on the land and this is something that has never happened before. Men and women are working together. This is because the men see that there is money in growing crops and that bigger crops will make them rich.'

A second woman—both were middle-aged—spoke after her,

'I was not of that opinion. I wanted consolidation before it came here. If you have land near your home, you can work to improve it. If it is a long way off, you cannot put on manure. I understood the value of manure by seeing crops grown by the Better Farmers. Before, I had four *shambas* and one was over a mile away. Now they are all together and near my home. There is only one difficulty. Our custom is, when a son gets married, he leaves his father's *shamba* to start one of his own. I do not want to break this custom, but now I have a married son and there is nowhere for him to go.'

And a third woman, rather older, added her piece.

'I was in favour of consolidation too. The boundaries of land have caused many disputes and quarrels amongst us. When there are fixed boundaries, these quarrels fade away. So I wanted consolidation before it came, and my husband agreed. Now I can farm properly and put manure on the *shamba*; we have a shed for the cattle to stay in at night. Besides that, my husband employs two men. When he goes away I supervise them and the work is not so hard. Men and women never worked together before. Now they do, and this is a big thing.'

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is a big thing. When we get some money, I shall ask my husband for a better house. We are in the way of progress now, but there is another thing: the Government must help us with our water, we need a scheme to bring it—that is the biggest thing.'

It is often said that women are the most conservative, and in some ways perhaps this may be so—especially in regard to marriage customs; but it struck me, almost everywhere I went, that it is the women who are most anxious to see these basic land reforms brought in, the men who oppose—not the old men so much as the younger, educated ones who have been to cities. Africa so often seems to reverse the expected order of things.

At any rate, there was no doubt of what these women thought about land reform. It is they, after all, the cultivators, the workers, who know where the shoe pinches, and no wonder they are out of patience with those young men of the towns who, while crying for political freedom, do their best to deny to their own women that measure of relief from hard, grinding toil which land consolidation and enclosure can afford.

Among the Luo, everything is done by clans—extended families would be a more correct term. This group is called the *jokakwaru* and consists of all the descendants of one grandfather. They hold their land in common and each individual, as he marries, is allocated a *shamba* by the *liguru*, the land elders. In time he probably inherits cultivation rights over other pieces from various mothers, uncles and cousins, and that is how fragmentation arises. All grazing land is held in common, as among all other tribes.

The *jokakwaru* system is at once a strength and a weakness, from a modern point of view. Livestock improvers regard it as an unmitigated curse.

'All the members of the group must agree to any sale of stock by any individual,' a vet told me. 'That makes destocking almost impossible, if only out of bloody-mindedness.' The livestock picture generally is a gloomy one. 'We are still trying to get across one or two of the most basic principles, such as dipping or spraying against ticks. Among the Kipsigis,

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over 5,000 people are spraying; here, with sixteen times the population, not 500 are. In the whole of Nyanza, with its 300,000 families, we have only sixty-seven Sahiwal bulls. 177 232

'On cattle, most of them won't budge. For instance, a man's prestige is somehow linked with that of his bulls, and they are most reluctant to castrate anything. Pioneers who try improved methods are unpopular and their neighbours are apt to gun for them; one man, for instance, had his pigs burnt alive. Still, we plug on. We have controlled rinderpest, if not East Coast fever—every year we give about 200,000 rinderpest inoculations. We export half a million hides and skins and are trying to improve their quality.'

It is perhaps worth noting that crops, whose improvement is considerable, are grown by women, but livestock is the exclusive concern of the men.

'In the years ahead,' this rather disillusioned vet concluded, 'we have only got to get across two basic principles: that a cow wants food all the year round, and that a calf needs milk. But it will take another twenty years before we make any real dent in Nyanza.'

On the other hand, some things unexpectedly catch on. A district officer who had seen fish-ponds in Malaya made half a dozen and stocked them with tilapia. Local people observed the ponds and, without any serious propaganda, dug others like them. Now there are over a thousand in Nyanza. They cost nothing, the Government provides free fingerlings and is full of plans for fish-ponds everywhere as the basis of a small industry. 177 228

## V

Maseno is a dynamo of education. It was started by the Church Missionary Society. 'The general plan of campaign was based on the model of Iona,' wrote the Rev. John Willis, later Bishop of Uganda, who with Bishop Tucker chose the site in 1904. On 14th January, 1906, the first resident missionaries, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Savile, moved in—there was not much to move into, merely a grass hut under a tree that housed both the Saviles and a primitive dispensary. Nearly 197 871

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firebrands. So in a small brick room put up by Bishop Tucker in 1911, and now the secondary school's common-room, I met a bunch of schoolmasters, all fluent in English, well-informed and politically-minded.

I put to them the question that most puzzled me; land reforms are unquestionably progressive and of benefit to Africans; by raising living standards they will advance the prospect of self-government; why, then, do so many educated Africans appear to oppose them?

The answer I got was unexpected. Mr. Samwell Ayan, a history teacher, a Makerere graduate, head of the Kenya Teachers' Union and an elected member of the District Council that was embroiled in trouble, spoke impressively—and with moderation and logic.

'People are not getting justice,' he said. 'Men are losing land they are entitled to because of bribery and corruption in the African Courts. Everyone is being bribed—land elders, chiefs, witnesses. Yes, from the African Courts a man can take his case before the D.C., but what can the D.C. do? He sees only the evidence in front of him; it is all rigged; the man loses his land. I know of many cases like that. The Courts are rotten—a washout.

'I know of a case where the president of the Court altered all the evidence after it had been given and sent it up to the superior Court. When the plaintiff heard the false evidence read out, he was hopelessly confused. Clerks take bribes to keep appeal cases beyond the date when the right to appeal lapses. This is being done even in Kisumu. All the land elders can be bribed. The hunger for land is so great.

'What should be done? First, hear land cases before everyone in the location who has, or is entitled to, land—a real people's court. Then, make tape-recordings of evidence in the lower courts; if the evidence is changed, everyone will know. And let the district officer take all land cases so that he hears everything.

'It is because of this corruption and unfairness that people oppose land consolidation. All the same, it has got to come. It is progressive. But do not let it be forced.'

Mr. Ayan spoke with sincerity and even passion. This

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662 668 question of bribery and corruption crops up everywhere and all concerned on the official side recognize it as their deepest enemy. But when I put Mr. Ayan's points to them they were a little sceptical. 'Of course there is bribery,' they said, 'but it is not as bad as that. And it is not the people who oppose land reforms, it is the politicians.' Mr. Ayan had just sent a telegram to the Governor asking for the removal of the 'reactionary D.C.' in Kisumu, so relations were naturally a bit strained.

VI

311 197 648 134 233 On the way to Maseno we had passed the ostensible *casus belli* between District Council and Government: the Kisiani hills, a barren, rocky bluff entirely denuded of vegetation and a scene of the most gruesome erosion, given over to goats browsing on boulders and any indomitable weed that had managed to germinate. This place had been leased by the District Council to the Government for the purpose of afforestation and about 800 acres of trees had been planted at a cost of £13,000.

311 648 668 197 Afforestation is unpopular. Goats were allowed to destroy the Kisiani seedlings and, when the forest department put up fences, people came and tore them down in the night. Others started to cultivate in defiance not only of the terms of the lease, but of regulations which forbid cultivation on steep hillsides. All this, in the official view, was part of a deliberate political campaign to stir up anti-Government feeling.

The Kisiani quarrel brought to a head bad feeling between the Central Nyanza District Council and the Government. All the Councillors are African save for the chairman, who is the D.C. Most of its senior technical staff are European and, in particular, it employs (as do all District Councils with large revenues) a fully qualified accountant to manage its finances.

Those elected Councillors most anxious for unrestricted freedom objected strongly to this accountant. Africans, they said, should have the spending of African money without European interference. Officials retorted that in proper,

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honest accounting lies the only defence against wholesale bribery and corruption—against the sort of thing Mr. Ayan had complained about so powerfully. 311 648 668

In the midst of this controversy the Council, with its elected majority, repudiated the lease of the Kisiani afforestation area and refused to take steps to stop sabotage of the plantations. The Government retorted by demanding repayment of the £13,000 spent upon them. This would have meant raising the Council's annual rate from eighteen to twenty-one shillings on each adult male. 177

This demand to increase the rate was, of course, turned down flat by the elected Councillors, who in their anger sacked the accountant, appointed a totally unqualified African at £1,000 a year to succeed him, and threatened to dismiss other European staff on grounds of race. They also voted large increases in their own salaries and allowances. [186]

Naturally I asked Mr. Ayan's views. The Kisiani trouble, in his account, boiled down to a number of misunderstandings. The individuals who owned cultivation rights in the hills had not, he said, ever fully understood the matter, it had not been properly explained. They thought the trees would be theirs, not common property. They had never given their permission on paper, with marks or signatures. The matter was explained to them by an unpopular chief who did not wait to hear all their objections. When they grazed their goats in the plantations they thought they were on their own property and were much aggrieved when they were fined. They had no land elsewhere. Land hunger was so acute as to be a more important matter even than marriage. 'If a man should lose his wife he can buy another; but once the land is gone you cannot buy any more.' 311 177 648

It looked like one more failure in public relations. But the officials denied this. 'We explained over and over again,' they said. '*Barazas*, news-sheets, radio . . . Everyone had a chance to put his case. No, behind it is the old story—politicians spreading rumours that it's all a trick to steal the land.' [668]

[pp. 110-151 not processed]